

A short Version in Syriac and Arabic of the *Gloria in Excelsis Deo*, with Additions by St. Athanasius the Great*

[Una breve versión siriaca y árabe de *Gloria in Excelsis Deo*,
con adiciones de S. Atanasio el Grande]

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Abstract: The manuscripts preserved in the Mingana Collection –Mingana Syriac MS 83 and Syriac MS 155– contain, *inter alia*, an interesting short piece dealing with the text of the *Gloria in Excelsis Deo* in Syriac and Arabic respectively with additions by Saint Athanasius the Great. The purpose of this paper is to draw the attention of scholars and colleagues to the existence of this hitherto unpublished work as well as to present its text and provide an analysis of its contents, linguistic features and likely authenticity.

Resumen: Los manuscritos conservados en la Colección de Mingana –Mingana Syriac MS 83 and Syriac MS 155– contienen, *inter alia*, una breve pero interesante parte del texto *Gloria in Excelsis Deo* en siriaco y árabe, respectivamente, con anotaciones de San Atanasio el Grande. El objetivo de este trabajo es mostrar a los investigadores y compañeros la existencia de estos manuscritos inéditos, así como presentar el texto y un análisis del contenido del mismo, sus rasgos lingüísticos y su autenticidad.

Keywords: Mingana Collection; Syriac MS 83; Syriac MS 155; *Gloria in Excelsis Deo*; Saint Athanasius the Great.

Palabras clave: Colección de Mingana; Syriac MS 83; Syriac MS 155; *Gloria in Excelsis Deo*; San Atanasio el Grande.

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Introduction

The rich collection of the Mingana Syriac, Arabic and Garshūni manuscripts, preserved in the University of Birmingham Library (England)¹ contains numerous valuable, and in some cases unique, works. Volume I of the *Catalogue* in particular contains a number of seminal works on a variety of Patristic and Christian subject matters in Syriac and Arabic (Garshūni). Two of these manuscripts, Mingana Syriac MS 83 and Syriac MS 155, contain a piece dealing with the text of the *Gloria in Excelsis Deo* in Syriac and Arabic respectively with additions by St. Athanasius the Great.

History of the Hymn

Gloria in excelsis Deo is the title and beginning of a hymn known also as the *Greater Doxology* as distinguished from the “Minor Doxology” or *Gloria Patri* and the “Angelic Hymn”.² The title is often abbreviated to “**Gloria in Excelsis**” or simply “**Gloria**”. It is an example of the *psalmiidiotici* (‘private psalms’), i.e. compositions by individuals in imitation of the biblical Psalter that were popular in the 2nd and 3rd centuries.³ Another surviving example of this lyric poetry is the *Te Deum*. The hymn begins with the words that the angels sang when the birth of Christ was announced to shepherds in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 2, verse 14. Other verses were added very early, forming a

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¹ A. Mingana, *Catalogue of the Mingana Collection of Manuscripts*, vol. I: *Syriac and Garshūni Manuscripts* (Cambridge, 1933); vol. II: *Christian Arabic Manuscripts and Additional Syriac* (Cambridge, 1936); vol. III: *Additional Christian Arabic and Syriac Manuscripts* (Cambridge, 1939).

² See F. L. Cross (ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd edition revised by E. A. Livingstone (Oxford, 2005), art. “Gloria in Excelsis”, p. 685.

³ See *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York, 1909), vol. 6, p. 585.

doxology, which in the fourth century became part of morning prayers, and is still recited in the Byzantine Rite Orthros service.⁴

The Manuscripts

The text of the present piece has survived in the following Mingana manuscripts:

(i) MS Mingana Syriac 83, dated A.G. 2096 = A.D. 1785. The part of the manuscript which comprises our Syriac text consists of fols. 142a-143b. This manuscript contains a collection of prayers and tracts of a mystical character in Syriac, including the prayer of Philoxenus of Mabbug; the vision of Macarius of Egypt; the commandments of our Lord to his disciples and the Trisagion, the first part of which is said to have been recited by the angels near the tomb of our Lord, and the second part by Joseph and Nicodemus.⁵

(ii) MS Mingana Syriac 155, dated ca. 1830 A.D. The part of the manuscript which comprises our Arabic text consists of fols. 91b-92a. This manuscript contains a number of different works in Syriac and Arabic (Garshūni), including a miracle in Arabic of Saint George in the city of Baghdad; theological questions asked by Saint Basil and answered by Saint Gregory Nazianzen and various prayers in Arabic to be recited by the faithful.⁶

The Present Piece

The Syriac and Arabic superscription of this short piece in both manuscripts attribute the additions to the text of the hymn entitled "Praise of the Angels on the day of the carnal birth of our Lord" to

⁴ Cf. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, p. 685.

⁵ For a detailed description of the contents of this manuscript, see A. Mingana, *Catalogue of the Mingana Collection of Manuscripts*, vol. I: *Syriac and Garshūni Manuscripts*, pp. 206-208.

⁶ For a detailed description of the contents of this manuscript, see A. Mingana, *Catalogue of the Mingana Collection of Manuscripts*, vol. I: *Syriac and Garshūni Manuscripts*, pp. 356-358.

Present-day Greek Text

Ἵμνουμέν σε, εὐλογοῦμέν σε, προσκυνοῦμέν σε, δοξολογοῦμέν σε, εὐχαριστοῦμέν σοι, διὰ τὴν μεγάλην σου δόξαν. Κύριε Βασιλεῦ, ἔπουράνιε Θεέ, Πάτερ παντοκράτορ, Κύριε Υἱὲ μονογενές, Ἰησοῦ Χριστέ, καὶ Ἅγιον Πνεῦμα. Κύριε ὁ Θεός, ὁ ἄμνός τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὁ Υἱὸς τοῦ Πατρὸς, ὁ αἴρων τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου, ἔλεησον ἡμᾶς, ὁ αἴρων τὰς ἁμαρτίας τοῦ κόσμου. Πρόσδεξαι τὴν δέησιν ἡμῶν, ὁ κατήμενος ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ Πατρὸς, καὶ ἔλεησον ἡμᾶς. Ὅτι σὺ εἶ μόνος Ἅγιος, σὺ εἶ μόνος Κύριος, Ἰησοὺς Χριστός, εἰς δόξαν Θεοῦ Πατρὸς. Ἀμήν. Καθ' ἑκάστην ἡμέραν εὐλογῆσω σε, καὶ αἰνέσω τὸ ὄνομά σου εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα καὶ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος.

⁷ Syriac: “ܡܠܟܬܐ ܕܥܝܪܐ ܕܩܝܫܐ ܕܥܝܪܐ ܕܩܝܫܐ ܕܥܝܪܐ ܕܩܝܫܐ”; Arabic: “وَكَلَّمَهَا الْقَدِيسُ” (= “and it was completed by St. Athanasius, Patriarch of Alexandria”).

Arabic (Garshūni) Version (Mingana Syr. MS 155)

تسبحة الملائكة التي⁸ سبحوها في يوم مولد سيدنا بالجسد وكلها القديس اثنا سيوس بطرك
اسكندرية

السيح لله في العلى وعلى الأرض السلام والرجاء الصالح لبني البشر: نستبشرك بباركك
نخدمك نسجد لك وتنطق بمجداك، نشكرك من أجل عظمة مجداك: الرب خالق ومملك
سماوي، الله الآب ضابط الكل: الرب الإله الإبن الوحيد يسوع المسيح مع روح القدس: أيها
الرب الإله يا حمل الله الإبن كلمة الآب الحامل خطايا العالم ارحمنا يا حامل خطايا العالم:
اصغي لنا أذنك واقبل طلبتنا: أيها الجالس بالمجد عن يمين أبيه اشفق وأترحم علينا: أنت
وحدك قدوس: أنت وحدك الرب يسوع المسيح مع روح القدس: المجد للإله الإبن آمين ❖
في كلّ حين وكلّ أيام حياتي أباركك: وأسبح لإسمك القدوس المبارك إلى الأبد الذي هو
ثابت إلى أبد الأبدين آمين.

Syriac Version (Mingana Syr. MS 83)

[illegible]

⁸ Ms: الذي

9 Ms: معدن

מכאן נראה כי המערכת היא מערכת חלוקה של המערכת, והיא
מכאן נראה כי המערכת היא מערכת חלוקה של המערכת, והיא
מכאן נראה כי המערכת היא מערכת חלוקה של המערכת, והיא

English Translation

Glory to you who has shown us the light. Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill to all people. We praise you, we bless you, we worship you, we glorify you, we give thanks to you for your great glory. Lord, King, heavenly God, Father, almighty; Lord, the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, and Holy Spirit. Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father who take away the sin of the world, have mercy on us, you who take away the sins of the world. Receive our prayer, you who sit at the right hand of the Father, and have mercy on us. For you only are holy, only you are Lord Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father. Amen. Each day we bless you, and we praise your name forever and to the ages of ages.

Additions attributed to St. Athanasius

The following is the Syriac and Arabic text of the additions ascribed to Saint Athanasius of Alexandria in both manuscripts:

Arabic (Garshūni)

Syriac Version

Version (Mingana Syr. MS 155)

(Mingana Syr. MS 83)

مبارك أنت يا رب ضابط الكل إله آبائنا:
مسيح إسمك ومعظم بالتسايخ: إلى أبد
الآبدين آمين: لك يليق المجد: ولك يليق
التسبيح: ولك يجب المدح إله الكل وأب: أب
الحق مع ابنك الوحيد: وروحك الحق القدوس:
من الآن وإلى دهر الداهرين آمين ❖ يا ربنا
يسوع المسيح باب رحمتك لا تغلق في وجوهنا

[illegible]

يا رب نحن الخاطئين: عبيدك نحن نعتزف اترحم
 علينا: محبتك أنزلتكم من موضعك إلينا يا رب:
 وبواسطة موتك تبطل موتنا¹⁰ اترحم علينا.

ܠܝܗܐ ܡܠܝܚܐ: ܡܠܝܚܐ ܡܠܝܚܐ ܡܠܝܚܐ
 ܡܠܝܚܐ ܡܠܝܚܐ: ܡܠܝܚܐ ܡܠܝܚܐ ܡܠܝܚܐ
 ܡܠܝܚܐ ܡܠܝܚܐ ܡܠܝܚܐ ܡܠܝܚܐ.

Translation of the Additions

Blessed are you, Lord Almighty, the God of our fathers. Your name is glorified and magnified by praises for ever and ever. You are worthy of glory; you are worthy of praise. Acclaim befits you, the God and Father of all, the Father of Truth with your Only- Begotten Son and your All Holy and Life-giving Spirit. Now and for ever and ever, Amen. Our Lord Jesus Christ, do not shut the gate of your mercy in our face. We the sinners, your servants, confess; have mercy on us. O Lord, your love caused you to come down to us from your position (place) so that through your death our mortality has become null and void: have mercy on us.

Conclusion

The Authenticity of the Piece with its additions must be questioned. Based on the language and the contents of both manuscripts, this piece probably belongs to the Pseudo-Athanasius works attributed to St. Athanasius which are of uncertain authenticity and are unlikely to be genuine Athanasius. To the best of my knowledge it does not rank amongst the surviving genuine authentic works of Saint Athanasius. It most likely falls into the category of valued works ascribed to Saint Athanasius the Great and sheltered under his authority. It is to be ranked with the *spuria* rather than with the merely *dubia*. None the less it is not without interest to Patristic scholars who are concerned with the out put of the great Theologian and Church Father of Alexandria.

¹⁰ Ms: ܡܝܬܘܬܢܢܐ, clearly following the Syriac: ܡܝܬܘܬܢܢܐ